

Failure to acknowledge the harm done to Belarusian culture and national singularity by the Russian-Belarus merger can only give comfort to Lukashenka and the Russian-Soviet irredentists.

Mr. Speaker, the negligence and mismanagement of Mr. Lukashenka's regime has also put at risk the nation's environment and the health of the people. Just last week, former Belarusian President Stanislaw Shushkevich spoke at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Washington office on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in neighboring Ukraine. More than 70 percent of the radioactive fallout from the world's worst nuclear accident fell on Belarusian territory. While there is plenty of blame to go around for mishandling of this disaster—among Soviet officials, and post-Soviet officials in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus—President Lukashenka exacerbates the problems by insisting that all aid to Chernobyl victims pass through his hands. These funds often are diverted to other uses. Fortunately, some Western NGOs and religious organizations have bypassed Lukashenka to get aid to the people who really need it.

Also last week, RFE/RL President Thomas A. Dine denounced efforts by the Belarusian KGB to intimidate journalists from that organization working in Belarus. Mr. Dine's statement came in response to the threats against Yahor Mayorchyk, a reporter for the news service funded by this Congress to provide objective information to people from the region. A KGB officer told Mr. Mayorchyk that the "same thing will happen to you as to Babitsky," a reference to RFE/RL journalist Andrei Babitsky who was arrested for his coverage of the war in Chechnya and faces trumped-up charges in Moscow.

Mr. Speaker, the abuses of the Lukashenka regime have been a source of concern for at least the past four years. In 1996, I introduced a Resolution expressing concern over the Lukashenka regime's violations of human and civil rights in direct violation of the Helsinki accords and the constitution of Belarus, and expressing concern about the union between Russia and Belarus. That Resolution also recognized March 25 as the anniversary of the declaration of an independent Belarusian state. A year later, I worked with leaders of the International Relations Committee to include language in the State Department Authorization bill, which passed the House, calling for our President to press the Government of President Lukashenka on defending the sovereignty of Belarus and guaranteeing basic freedoms and human rights.

For years now, the Belarusian-American community has been trying to inform the American people about the truth in Belarus, that President Lukashenka's actions do not have widespread support and his regime has lost any sense of legitimacy it once may have had. I want to thank the Belarusian-American community in New Jersey and throughout the nation for continuing to speak the truth about events in the land of their ancestors.

Obviously, President Lukashenka has not been moved by these expressions of concern by the United States and the international community. But we must not give up. We

should go on record condemning the abuses that have taken place, and continue to take place in Belarus. We must urge our President and State Department to keep the pressure on President Lukashenka—and also Russian President Vladimir Putin.

For these and many other reasons, I urge my colleagues to support passage of this Resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 304.

The question was taken.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SIERRA LEONE PEACE SUPPORT ACT OF 2000

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3879) to support the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone in its peace-building efforts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3879

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Sierra Leone Peace Support Act of 2000".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND SENSE OF CONGRESS.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Eight years of civil war and massive human rights violations have created a humanitarian crisis in the Republic of Sierra Leone, leaving over 50,000 dead and 1,000,000 displaced from their homes.

(2) As many as 480,000 Sierra Leoneans have fled into neighboring countries, especially Guinea.

(3) All parties to the conflict have committed abuses, but the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and its ally, the former Sierra Leonean army (AFRC) are responsible for the overwhelming majority.

(4) The RUF and AFRC have systematically abducted, raped, mutilated, killed, or forced children to fight alongside RUF soldiers.

(5) The RUF continues to hold hundreds and perhaps thousands of prisoners, including many child soldiers, despite the agreement of RUF leadership at Lome to release all children.

(6) The civil defense forces committed human rights violations, including killings and recruitment of child soldiers, and Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) forces have also committed human rights abuses, including executions of captured combatants and killings of civilians.

(7) Neighboring countries, especially Liberia and Burkina Faso, have contributed greatly to the destruction of Sierra Leone by aiding and arming the RUF and providing sanctuary for RUF fighters.

(8) International humanitarian efforts to assist Sierra Leoneans, both at home and in Guinea, have fallen far short of need such that conditions in refugee camps and among displaced persons camps are deplorable, food and medicine is dangerously inadequate, and the refugee population on the Sierra Leonean border continues to be preyed upon by RUF insurgents and subjected to rape, mutilation, or killing.

(9) Demobilization, demilitarization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts, as called for in the Lome agreement of July 1999, have begun months late and are still at beginning stages.

(10) With the withdrawal of the West African peacekeeping forces, the United Nations Security Council has approved the deployment of 11,000 peacekeeping forces for Sierra Leone.

(11) There are approximately 45,000 combatants, including many child soldiers, in Sierra Leone who must be demobilized, provided with alternate employment, and reintegrated into their communities.

(12) Both the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF/AFRC formally agreed in the Lome Convention of July 7, 1999, to uphold, promote, and protect the human rights (including the right to life and liberty, freedom from torture, the right to a fair trial, freedom of conscience, expression, and association, and the right to take part in the governance of one's country) of every Sierra Leonean as well as the enforcement of humanitarian law.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—The Congress urges the President to vigorously promote efforts to end further degradation of conditions in the Republic of Sierra Leone, to dramatically increase United States assistance to demobilization, demilitarization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts and humanitarian initiatives, to assist in the collection of documentation about human rights abuses by all parties, and to engage in diplomatic initiatives aimed at consolidating the peace and protecting human rights.

SEC. 3. DEMOBILIZATION, DEMILITARIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the President \$13,000,000 for fiscal year 2001 for assistance under chapter 4 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2221 et seq.) to the Sierra Leone DDR Trust Fund of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for demobilization, demilitarization, and reintegration assistance in Sierra Leone. Assistance under the preceding sentence may not be used to provide stipends to ex-combatants of the civil war in the Republic of Sierra Leone.

(b) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to subsection (a)—

(1) are in addition to any other amounts available for the purpose described in such subsection; and

(2) are authorized to remain available until expended.

SEC. 4. DEMOCRATIZATION, ELECTORAL, AND JUDICIAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) JUDICIAL ASSISTANCE.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the President \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2001 for assistance to rebuild and strengthen the capacity of the judiciary in the Republic of Sierra Leone and to assist efforts to establish the rule of law and maintain law and order in Sierra Leone.

(b) **EXPANDED INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE.**—Beginning 1 year after the conclusion of free and fair elections in Sierra Leone, the President may provide expanded international military education and training assistance to the military forces and related civilian personnel of Sierra Leone under section 541 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2347) solely for the purpose of providing training relating to defense management, civil-military relations, law enforcement cooperation, and military justice.

(c) **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subsection (a)—

(1) are in addition to any other amounts available for the purposes described in such subsection; and

(2) are authorized to remain available until expended.

SEC. 5. ACCOUNTABILITY.

(a) **STATEMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY.**—It is the sense of the Congress that a thorough and non-partisan initiative to collect information on human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict in the Republic of Sierra Leone be undertaken. Comprehensive and detailed information, particularly the identification of specific units, individuals, and commanders found to have been especially abusive, will be essential for vetting human rights abusers from the newly formed armed forces and police forces of Sierra Leone and for deterring abuses by all parties in the future. Accordingly, the Congress calls upon the administration to strongly support an independent process of data collection on human rights abuses in Sierra Leone, for use by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when it has been established, and to support any future initiatives of international accountability for Sierra Leone.

(b) **ASSISTANCE FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION.**—

(1) **ASSISTANCE FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND SUPPORT OF COMMISSION.**—The President is authorized to provide assistance for the establishment and support of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish accountability for human rights abuses in the Republic of Sierra Leone.

(2) **ASSISTANCE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION.**—The Secretary of State, acting through the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, is authorized to collect human rights data with respect to Sierra Leone and assist the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in carrying out its functions.

(3) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

(A) **ESTABLISHMENT AND SUPPORT OF COMMISSION.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the President \$1,500,000 for fiscal year 2001 for assistance under chapter 4 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to carry out paragraph (1).

(B) **HUMAN RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of State \$500,000 for fiscal year 2001 to carry out paragraph (2). Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under the preceding sentence shall be deposited in the "Human Rights Fund" of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the Department of State.

(C) **AVAILABILITY.**—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subparagraphs (A) and (B) are authorized to remain available until expended.

SEC. 6. NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF SIERRA LEONE.

(a) **REPORTS TO CONGRESS.**—

(1) **ARMS FLOWS.**—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report which provides information, including measurable, credible, and verifiable evidence (to the extent practicable), concerning the extent to which neighboring countries of the Republic of Sierra Leone are involved in arms flows into Sierra Leone.

(2) **SIERRA LEONEAN MINERALS.**—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report which provides information, including measurable, credible, and verifiable evidence (to the extent practicable), concerning illicit sales of Sierra Leonean gold and diamonds through neighboring countries of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

(b) **NOTIFICATION BY SECRETARY OF STATE.**—If a report transmitted by the President pursuant to paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a) contains measurable, credible, or verifiable evidence that a country is involved in arms flows into Sierra Leone, or that a country is involved in illicit sales of Sierra Leonean gold or diamonds through that country, then the Secretary of State—

(1) shall take all necessary steps to initiate diplomatic efforts to bring about the termination of such activities by the country; and

(2) if the country has not ceased the proscribed activity within 3 months of the initiation of such diplomatic efforts, shall inform the country of the possibility that United States foreign assistance for the country may be terminated or suspended if the country does not cease the proscribed activity.

(c) **ASSISTANCE FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.**—United States assistance may be provided to the central government of a neighboring country of the Republic of Sierra Leone only if such government—

(1)(A) provides demonstrated support for the peace process in the Republic of Sierra Leone in accordance with the Lome Convention of July 7, 1999; and

(B) does not provide training or other support for the RUF/AFRC forces or any other forces proscribed under the Lome Convention; and

(2) cooperates with efforts to monitor arms flows to Sierra Leone.

(3) **UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE.**—In this subsection, the term "United States assistance" means assistance of any kind which is provided by grant, sale, loan, lease, credit, guaranty, or insurance, or by any other means, by any agency or instrumentality of the United States Government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3879.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this measure, which was introduced by the ranking member of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), and considered by our Committee on International Relations.

I wish I could express strong confidence that Sierra Leone will enjoy a peaceful and democratic future, but at this point we cannot. I fear that the significant problems and lack of cooperation with the U.N. peacekeepers in Sierra Leone that they have experienced since the outset of their deployment will continue. We also fear that the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF, which has waged a war of terror and atrocity against its own citizens, has not changed in its ultimate objective; that is, the complete dominance of Sierra Leone.

Nonetheless, I support this measure on the basis that we must make every effort, and even take some chances, where the future of so many innocent and suffering people is concerned.

My hope is that these funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including the documentation of continuing abuses and the tracking of arms flows. They can also support the effort to contain an emerging international criminal enterprise that operates with the consent, support, and even the direction of President Charles Taylor of Liberia.

President Taylor pioneered the technique of election by exhaustion in which a population becomes so fatigued by war and violence that it is willing to accept as a leader even the very person who inflicted that violence if he promises to ease their suffering.

The RUF rebels in Sierra Leone seem to be operating from Mr. Taylor's play book. Of course, they have added their own creative touches such as carving their initials into the bodies of the children they kidnapped and chopping the limbs of toddlers to invoke terror in the population. It is disgraceful that our government gave its blessing to this brutal and twisted group's entries into the government of Sierra Leone. I am saddened that the President's special representative for democracy in Africa presided over the signing of this Faustian bargain in July last year.

Despite these misgivings, we cannot abandon hope for the beleaguered people of Sierra Leone. Accordingly, I support the passage of this measure by the House.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, at the conclusion of my remarks, the gentleman

from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) control the remaining time on this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The connection between Sierra Leone and Connecticut is an old one, starting with the Amistad. The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) and others just joined us in Connecticut to remember the courage of the cargo of the Amistad, those people who had been enslaved in their fight for freedom.

It is sad to see the continued torture of the citizens of Sierra Leone, and therefore, the little effort that we are putting forth here, the United States involvement, to try to end the bloodshed, to try to immobilize and disarm the armed combatants. We need to make sure that the killing stops. Many of these soldiers are really children, and we have to work with those in the country to provide accountability for the victims to work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to make sure the guilty are pursued, that the rights of the victims are not forgotten. We must be the leaders here to promote peace in Sierra Leone, because as almost everywhere, the world looks to the United States.

The international community is ready to make a significant effort here, but American leadership, as always, is critical. So I would hope we would have broad support for this resolution. I commend the chairman of the subcommittee and the chairman of the full committee for all of their great work here.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time, to be controlled by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) henceforth.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the distinguished chairman of our Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

Sierra Leone has experienced one of the most horrific civil wars in the world over the past decade. The atrocities there have perhaps been some of the most shocking that we have seen in the world. Tens of thousands of people have been victimized. There have been killings, there have been rapes, but most shockingly, there has been a policy of forced amputations carried out as a terror tactic by the Revolutionary United Front.

It is hard to imagine, but this rebel group which has won the world's disdain, has a policy of cutting off the hands, the arms of little boys and little girls. The streets of the capital, Freetown, is full of amputees, thousands of amputees, including many children.

This is sheer cowardliness. It deserves the strongest condemnation that is possible out of this institution, and out of the world.

There should be no question on another issue: the RUF and its allies have been guilty of attacking a democratically elected government. This group has been aided and abetted by neighboring Liberia. This bill brings attention to that aid and has constructive measures designed to pressure those neighbor governments to not wage war on the people of Sierra Leone.

There is a peace agreement in place in Sierra Leone. It is a precarious peace. Unfortunately, the RUF appears to be reverting to form, waging war, disregarding peace. The RUF most recently has taken U.N. peacekeepers hostage. Its leaders have made clear in the most inflammatory statements that the U.N. is not welcome. Since the beginning of the peace process, I have expressed my serious reservations about the policy of bringing the RUF into the Sierra Leone Government. Well, that has been done. Now I hope that the peace can be built anyway.

Mr. Speaker, this bill makes a modest contribution to building peace. We should do this. We should help Nigeria and other West Africa states who have made a great sacrifice in lives and funds to bring stability to this country of Sierra Leone. It is in America's interests to see that terror does not win the day in Sierra Leone. For if it does, more than Sierra Leone will be imperiled. All of West Africa will be imperiled, and America would suffer too.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the gentleman from Connecticut for his legislation. Many of us on the Committee on International Relations have been concerned about Sierra Leone. We have held several hearings, we have passed resolutions, and now we have this legislation. There is strong committee support for this approach.

For the sake of the little boys and girls who tragically will live their lives with no hands and arms, for the sake of the future of West Africa, and for America's interest in a stable and better world, I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the chairman of the full committee, and our ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) for moving this legislation forward. I certainly would like to commend my chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for his untiring devotion to the subcommittee and for moving legislation forward and the interest that he has taken in the problems of the continent.

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Let me say that Sierra Leone is a country which gained its independence

back in 1961, but since that time it has had a difficult time from its first president, Momoh, to the current president, Kabbah. It is a country which has had a difficulty in the quality of life for its rural people in particular. A country which, incidentally, is small enough to be able to deal with its problems, a country very rich in diamonds and other natural resources.

And so I strongly support the Sierra Leone Peace Support Act of 2000, H.R. 3879, because what this legislation will do is to help to support the peace-building efforts of Sierra Leone. It would help with the demobilization and demilitarization and reintegration of the military, which is essential in order to have people who are carrying arms to put them back and get back into civilian life.

Mr. Speaker, let me also commend the Nigerian military, as the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) has already done, with the forces of ECOMOG that for many years kept the peace in Freetown and in Sierra Leone. Without their efforts, the situation would have been much more difficult.

I would certainly agree that the RUF has been extraordinarily brutal. Nowhere in the world has there been more horrific behavior on the part of a military group, because this group would take its vengeance out on civilians, and not only civilians, but usually children and women, amputating hands and legs.

And so it was difficult to come to an accord with the RUF in a government of reconciliation where President Kabbah has allowed Foday Sankoh to be a part of the new government, bringing in the rebels with the government to try to simply have the people of Sierra Leone have a quality of life that they deserve.

Sierra Leone is a country that has a tremendous background as relates to the United States. As my colleagues may know, the Amistad, as the gentleman from (Mr. GEJDENSON) talked about, Cinque was from Sierra Leone; and in the trial they were found not guilty and allowed to go back to Sierra Leone. I had an opportunity to hear from his great, great grandchildren who came to Connecticut.

And so, as a matter of fact, after the Revolutionary War, African American slaves who fought with the British were given their freedom by Britain and allowed to go back to Sierra Leone, and people who were picked up on the high seas were also allowed to go to Sierra Leone. So that is a country that has strong ties with African Americans and Africans.

We hope that the peace will keep. We are disturbed at the recent behavior of a small group of the RUF. The majority of them have come in; but there is a group, anarchist group that has broken off from the regular RUF organization that Mr. Foday Sankoh is attempting to bring in. We know that

this legislation will go forward to help ameliorate the situation, and we are hoping to see peace for the people of Sierra Leone.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3879, the Sierra Leone Peace Act of 2000.

Congressman TONY HALL and I were in Sierra Leone a few months ago. We witnessed the brutal atrocities carried out against the civilian population by the rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Although both the government of Sierra Leone and the rebel forces signed the Lome Peace accord, reports continue to flow out of Sierra Leone about continued unrest and further atrocities committed by rebel forces.

It is my hope that the Sierra Leone Peace Act will greatly assist the Lome Peace accords and the continued pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and recovery for this country that has endured so much.

I recently wrote both President Clinton and Secretary Albright urging the Administration to set a to be determined date by which the Sierra Leonian rebels should comply with the peace accords or face being named by the U.S. as war criminals and that they not be allowed to travel to the U.S. I submit this correspondence and a copy of my trip report from my time in Sierra Leone for the RECORD.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2000.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
The President, The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to you about the continuing tragedy in Sierra Leone.

As you know, although a tenuous peace is in place, the former rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are disarming at a slow to minimal rate. Numerous reports indicate that the RUF has taken weapons from U.N. peacekeepers at gun point. Reports also indicate that atrocities such as rape, intimidation, and forced conscription are continuing by the supposedly disbanded RUF.

Present and former RUF units still operate and control certain sections of the country, specifically the diamond producing areas.

I have enclosed a letter which I sent to Secretary Albright outlining proposed action that the U.S. should take if the RUF continues its atrocities, occupation, and reluctance to disarm by a to be determined designated date.

The entire country of Sierra Leone will continue to experience suffering and turmoil unless leadership is exercised by the U.S.

You must do something (see my letter to Secretary Albright for proposed courses of U.S. action). I urge you to act quickly.

Best wishes

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

OBSERVATIONS BY U.S. REP. FRANK R. WOLF OF VIRGINIA, VISIT TO WESTERN AFRICA: SIERRA LEONE AFTER A DECADE OF CIVIL WAR, NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 8, 1999

This report provides details of a trip Congressman Tony Hall of Ohio and I made to Western Africa to see the conditions in Sierra Leone and in refugee camps nearby in Guinea. We spent two days in Sierra Leone and an additional day visiting refugee camps in bordering Guinea. The people desperately need an end to years of civil strife, terrorism

and brutality. Humanitarian assistance in the form of food, medical and public health assistance is urgently required. The country's leaders are struggling with a most fragile peace accord and the community of nations must do whatever it can to strengthen it.

Our trip to Western Africa provided the opportunity to observe conditions in and around Sierra Leone resulting from a decade-long civil war. I have been to Africa a number of times, but this was my first time in Western Africa. Congressman Hall had visited Sierra Leone once about 10 years ago. I have followed the history of this country for a long while and have been looking for ways to help the people.

Sierra Leone is a part of the immense portion of Africa that juts westward into the Atlantic Ocean just above the equator. It is slightly larger than West Virginia and has a population of about 4.6 million of which about one half million people live in the capital of Freetown. Though the country is rich in natural resources, per capita income is only about \$285, which ranks Sierra Leone among the very poorest nations in the world. This can be attributed primarily to civil strife and rebel terrorism.

Sierra Leone gained independence from Great Britain in 1961 and a continuing struggle for self governance has followed. The elect government was toppled by an army coup in 1992 and a state of civil war has largely existed since. Elections were again held in 1996 when current President Kabbah emerged as the winner. He has held office ever since and his government, with military assistance from The Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), has continued to battle rebel forces made up of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Counsel (AFRC). In July 1999, the Lome Peace Accords were finally signed and a very fragile peace is beginning to take hold in the region. Presently, it is the best hope if not the only hope to end years of brutality, poverty and despair in Sierra Leone.

On December 5, we visited two refugee camps in the Forecariah Province of Guinea located about 20 kilometers across the border from Sierra Leone. Each camp held thousands of refugees, some of whom have lived there for years. Barely adequate food supplies are dwindling and there was some unrest. There is little progress in educating the children or in pursuing efforts to upgrade an existence reduced to the most basic of simply sustaining life.

On December 6 and 7, we visited Sierra Leone and its capital of Freetown. We met with the President and with leaders of Parliament. We met rebel leaders, members of the clergy and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) representatives. And we met with many victims who will carry throughout their lives horrible physical and emotional scars of years of civil war perpetrated because of greed and power.

Existence for too many in Sierra Leone is one of hunger, homelessness, poverty and pain. And this seems strange. Sierra Leone is, or should be, an agricultural oasis. Its temperate climate, fertile soil and abundant rain should result in the production of crops and goods far above what the people could consume. The Atlantic Ocean yields an unending harvest of seafood and offers immediate access to important trade routes around the world. And the country is rich in diamonds and minerals for which there is a huge market and huge demand. Yet, because of the civil war, people are without even the basic necessities of life.

We visited a housing reclamation project established by Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Much of Freetown has been destroyed, looted and burned by rebel forces and CRS has started a program of helping people to rebuild their lost homes. The Sierra Leonians supply the labor, the muscle and much of the raw material from other destroyed structures and CRS offers guidance, harder-to-get building supplies, food rations and a great deal of encouragement. Many new homes are rising out of the rubble. It is a good program.

We visited the Holy Mary Clinic. Two doctors, a husband and wife team, have been operating a clinic for several years to deal with young children who are the worst victims of the war. About 3,000 girls and boys have been taken hostage by rebel forces and many continue to be held today. Some 500 young girls have been returned. They have been horribly sexually abused and were used as sex slaves, temporary wives and household workers. They have been returned or have escaped and are psychologically devastated. Some have no parents left alive and have no one to turn to, no family to help them. Many are pregnant and have sexually transmitted diseases (STD). These are young girls, many are barely 14 years old. The boys taken by the rebels are also young children and have been brainwashed, probably drugged and then recruited into the rebel army.

Holy Mary Clinic does a wonderful job of dealing with this trauma and with young infants and pregnant girls needing pre-natal and medical care and counseling. The clinic doctors rely on friends, colleagues and family from Italy for supplies, medicines and equipment. They are doing an outstanding job, but are stretched so thin and could use help. The AIDS virus adds to the despair and the hopelessness, too. We visited a therapeutic feeding center where dozens of starving infants hover on the edge of death. These young children are so malnourished they have no strength to eat and are being force fed in an attempt to sustain life. They are so thin and so fragile that we were afraid that they would break if we just even touched them.

We saw a former railroad repair factory converted to housing for displaced persons where thousands of homeless refugees are being warehoused. This huge former factory building provides a roof over the refugees' heads and little more. There were few indications of real help being applied to return refugees to a self-sufficient life.

The Murray Town amputee camp is where victims of rebel brutality go after having their limbs mindlessly hacked off with machetes, axes or knives simply to frighten and terrorize. The amputees receive counseling, some medical care and the beginnings of assistance with crutches and prostheses. They are also fed and have a place to stay.

One of the first people we saw was a 14-year-old girl whose parents had been killed. She was pregnant, having been raped by rebel soldiers, and had both hands cut off above the wrist. We saw tiny children who had lost limbs. We heard tales of a grotesque lottery where a person drew a slip from a bag. If the slip contained the word "hand", "arm", "leg", "ear", "both feet", "head" or other parts of the body, then the rebels proceeded to carry out the sentence. This sounds unbelievable, but we saw the painful results. Sometimes the rebel butcher offered a choice—long sleeve or short sleeve. That meant: do you want your arm cut off at the wrist or above the elbow?

Yet one of the camp leaders who had lost his right arm this way told us of seeing the

two rebels who mutilated him when they paid a visit to the amputee center. He said that he had forgiven them. He said it was time to move forward from this chapter of despair. Reconciliation is what he was talking about.

We heard a member of the clergy tell of listening to a small boy ask of the camp counselor, "When will my hands grow back?" The rebels abused children too young to even have an inkling of what was happening to them.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The West, including the United States and European Union (EU) nations, should quickly provide food and medical supplies to save lives which are in danger. The World Food Programme has asked that more food supplies be directed to Guinea and Sierra Leone so basic food needs can be met. We were told that the food allotment to the refugees is down from a caloric intake of 2,100 a day to 1,400 a day.

The civil war is largely being funded by the sale of unregulated diamonds (conflict diamonds) being mined in regions held by rebel forces. Congressman Hall has introduced legislation to certify the country of origin of all diamonds. Thus a diamond buyer will know where diamonds have been mined and a purchaser can avoid buying conflict diamonds. Not only are the profits from these illicit diamonds used to fund a war of terror against the people of Sierra Leone, but the people are being deprived of the benefits that these natural resources could offer their society. Passage of Congressman Hall's bill would be a huge stride in ending this practice. Also, we have written United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan asking the U.N. to sanction black-market diamonds that are not certified by the government of Sierra Leone.

Every effort should be made to support the current disarmament program which is in place but wobbly. More needs to be done to make it desirable for the rebels to turn in their weapons, come in out of the bush and rejoin society. So far only a few thousand out of about 45,000 rebels have surrendered their arms.

The West should exert every possible leverage on rebel leaders and also Charles Taylor in Liberia, who is aiding the rebels, to end the civil war. The fragile peace agreement between the government, the RUF, the AFRC and their leaders must be sustained, enforced and nourished. There is an African saying we heard, "When the elephants fight, the grass dies." This is certainly the case here. Bad leaders motivated by greed and power have nearly destroyed a nation and its people.

Pressure from the United States government and others including European Union (EU) nations on the leadership of the RUF/AFRC to implement the provisions of the accord would be helpful in ensuring success.

Similar pressure on Liberian President Taylor to ensure that arms and men do not enter Sierra Leone from Liberia would also help.

The U.S. government joined by EU nations should send these leaders the message that unless peace is achieved, they will not be welcomed in the West. Their families and children will not be welcomed. No visas will be issued. Outside their borders, these leaders will be treated as war criminals and there will be no place for them to spend their ill-gotten gains.

And the process of reconciliation for the people of Sierra Leone needs to begin. Here, as elsewhere around the globe, lasting peace

will depend upon the people being able to reconcile their differences.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and salute all those in the region who came from America and elsewhere to lend a hand to the people of Sierra Leone. The ambassadors and embassy staff personnel, the NGO representatives, doctors and medical staff and clergy who are there at personal risk and discomfort are truly making a difference, and I was so proud to see the job they are doing.

We saw the great service of citizens from Congressman Tony Hall's district in Dayton, Ohio. They have been working for years on schools, housing, training academies for the blind and other terribly needed programs that have been helping the people of Sierra Leone. It has been said that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. The people of Dayton have ignited an eternal flame in Freetown.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2000.

Hon. MADELEINE KORBEL ALBRIGHT,
Secretary of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SECRETARY: I write today about the worsening situation in Sierra Leone. Congressman Troy Hall and I visited Sierra Leone last December. We were horrified at the atrocities we saw. Throughout the country, rebel groups have tortured, killed, and maimed thousands of people to gain control of the country's diamond industry, fueling the trade in illicit "conflict diamonds." Across a broad spectrum, the conditions in Sierra Leone were among the worse I have ever seen in the many places I've visited in the world.

At the time of our visit, it was too early to determine the effectiveness of the Lome Peace Accord and the rebels' compliance with it. In my trip report, which I have enclosed for you, I outlined several recommendations about the developing situation in Sierra Leone and the prospective response and involvement of the United States and Europe in achieving peace and stability in the region. In light of the current situation in Sierra Leone, I want to reiterate those recommendations with you.

First, the flow of conflict diamonds from rebel held areas must stop. Reports indicate that rebel forces still control most of the diamond producing regions in Sierra Leone, suggesting that the trafficking of these diamonds is going to continue to fuel bloodshed upon the people of Sierra Leone. Reports indicate that an overwhelming majority of rebels have not disarmed and that they have control of most, if not all, of the diamond producing region. This condition cannot be tolerated by the U.S., Europe, ECOMOG, and the United Nations.

Congressman Hall has introduced legislation, H.R. 3188, to certify the country of origin of all diamonds. Thus a diamond buyer will know where a diamond has been mined and a purchaser can avoid buying conflict diamonds. Passage of Congressman Hall's bill will be a huge stride in ending this practice. Your support for this important legislation would be very helpful.

My report stated that every effort should be made to support the disarmament program in Sierra Leone. Reports include that not only are the rebels not disarming, but they have repeatedly confronted at gunpoint ECOMOG and U.N. peacekeepers and taken their weapons, ammunition, armored personnel carriers, etc. Bold action is needed from the Administration on this matter. I urge you to issue a statement and a fixed

date, that you think is reasonable and helpful, to the rebels making clear when the rebels should be completely disarmed and what action the U.S. will take if they are not disarmed.

Promised U.S. action if the rebels do not comply with the conditions for disarmament should be:

They and their families will not be allowed entry into the U.S., Britain or any other country—no visas should be issued to rebels or their family members;

If the rebels have bank accounts in the U.S. and in Europe, they should be frozen and they should be denied access to these accounts and to future commerce with the U.S., bank accounts of rebel family members should be included in this prohibition too;

The rebel leaders should be declared war criminals by the U.S. and other Western countries and direct its intelligence and police agencies to actively pursue apprehending rebels who have not disarmed.

These same conditions should also be applied to Liberian Charles Taylor and all Liberians who have assisted the rebels in Sierra Leone. It has come to my attention that Taylor escaped from a Massachusetts prison and fled to Liberia. Taylor and many Liberians have blood on their hands from their support of these rebels. By being the primary conduit for trading the conflict diamonds mined by the rebels, and by reportedly supplying the rebels with military assistance, Taylor and others have fueled the atrocities committed by the rebels upon the people of Sierra Leone. The U.S. should enact similar measures and conditions against Taylor and other Liberians as those I proposed for the rebels in Sierra Leone.

If the rebels are not disarmed and if Taylor and other Liberians continue to traffic in conflict diamonds and to provide the rebels with military assistance, Taylor and others should be named as war criminals and they should not be allowed to travel outside of their country. You should fix a date that you think is reasonable and helpful.

Lastly, I ask that the U.S. continue to bolster its efforts to bring belief, aid, and ultimately reconciliation to the region. U.S. leadership in helping the people of Sierra Leone recover from the brutality is integral in creating stability and peace in the region.

I do appreciate you taking the time to visit Sierra Leone. It was a good thing to do.

I would be happy to discuss with you in more detail my recommendations and observations. Thank you for your consideration.

Best wishes.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3879, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.